opening land routes through Wagha and Atari Border;

(b) if so, whether Government have considered the implication involved in the land route trade from the point of its vulnerability to smugglers and militants; and

(c) if so, what is the decision, if any, taken by the Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) to (c) Requests from Indian trade and Industry for opening up of land route through Wagha-Atari boder for overland trade with Pakistan are being examined, in the first place, in consultation with all concerned Government agencies.

Shortfall in Export of Spices

654. SHRIMATI BASANTI SARMA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been a shortfall in the export of spices during the current year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government are proposing to take some remedial steps to contain this shortfall; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise.

Decline in Export of Tea

655. SHRI TARA CHARAN MAJUMDAR: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether steep decrease in export of Indian Tea has been reported during 1996-97;

(b) if so, reasons therefor with names of producing States affected from such decrease;

(c) whether Government propose to take some immediate steps to boost export of Indian tea in 1997-98 and onwards; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) No, Sir. Exports of tea from India during 1996-97 have been of the order of 162.86 million kgs. (estimated) valued at Rs. 1231.85 crores as compared to 163.65 million kgs. during 1995-96 valued at Rs. 1191.19 crores indicating thereby an inprovement in export earnings during 1996-97 despite marginal shortfall in volume of exports.

(c) and (d) Government and the Tea Board have been analysing coutry-wise exports of tea giving special attention to areas offering potential. Tea Board also acts to remove bottlenecks in exports to individual markets whenever these are noticed.

Other steps taken to increase exports of Indian Tea include (a) participation in major trade fairs/exhibitions abroad; (ii) media campaign to increase consumer awareness of speciality of Indian tea and campaign to pupularise the Tea Board's marketing symbol which stands for pure Indian tea.

Prospects of domestic vanaspati makers in Indo-Nepal Trade

656. SHRI DIPANKAR MUKERJEE: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item which appeared in The Economic Times dated 23.8.97 captioned "Indo-Nepal Trade puts the lid on domestic vanaspati makers"; and

(b) if so, Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Indo-Nepal Treaty of Trade, as modified in December 1996, facilitates preferential access to the Indian market for items manufactured in Nepal. However, the Treaty also provided that if it is found that the facility has led to a surge in the imports from Nepal generally or in the import of any particular article, the two Governments, shall enter into consultations with each other for taking appropriate measures. Data reported in the representations on the subject received by Govt. has been examined by the concerned Departments and it has been found that it does not establish any surge in imports of vanaspati oils etc. from Nepal after December, 1996.

Target for Export-Growth

657. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:
SHRI JALALUDIN ANSARI:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government had targeted an export growth rate of 18 per cent for the current year;

(b) if so, whether it is also a fact that the export growth rate in 1997-98 will probably touch not more than 10 per cent considering the present trend;

(c) if so, the details and reasons for low rate of export growth; and

(d) remedial steps proposed to be taken to boost export?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH): (a) and (b) A target growth of 18% in US $ terms was envisaged for exports during 1997-98. As per the latest DGCI&S data exports have registered a growth 4.22% in dollar terms during the period April—September, 1997 over the corresponding period in the previous years.

(c) and (d) Export performance is influenced inter alia by international market conditions, sectoral strengths and problems, infrastructural bottlenecks and policy framework. Export promotional measures are continuously taken by the Government through policies and procedures, by providing the export friendly environment, interaction with trade and industry, involvement of State Government in export promotion etc. Government have taken a number of measures recently including decisions on trade matters in the newly created Export Promotion Board.

विदेशों में भारत की जड़ी-बूटियों, मसालों आदि का पेटेंटीकरण

658. **प्रो० विजय कुमार मल्होत्रा:** क्या वाणिज्य मंत्री यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) भारत की कौन-कौन सी जड़ी-बूटियों, मसालों, पेड़-पौधों के अंगों को विदेशों में पेटेंट कराया गया है; और

(ख) हजारों वर्षों से प्रयोग में आ रही इन वस्तुओं के पेटेंटीकरण को रोकने के लिए सरकार क्या कदम उठा रही है?

वाणिज्य मंत्रालय के राज्य मंत्री (श्री बोल्ला बुल्ली रमैया): सूचना एकत्र की जा रही है और सदन के पटल पर रख दी जाएगी।

Time-frame for removing Import Restriction

659. SHRI K.R. MALKANI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Government have reduced the time-frame and agreed to remove restrictions on import of several agricultural products from developed countries like U.S.A. European Union, Australia and Switzerland (vide Observer, 28.1.97);

(b) the rational for encouraging imports; and

(c) the impact of such import of non-essentials on Indian Industry?